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Weelde and the Final Mesolithic of the Belgian Campine

A preliminary report on the excavations of a mesolithic site at Weelde (North Belgium)

Introduction

The site was discovered by one of us (R. Foblets) on the occasion of archaeological field survey of the region. The excavations were carried out during summers 1976 and 1977 by the "Laboratorium voor Prehistorie" of the "Katholieke Universiteit te Leuven" under the direction of P. M. Vermeersch. The preliminary analysis of the lithic material was effectuated by D. Huyge.

The geographical setting

The site is situated at Weelde in the Antwerp northern Campine at the place called "Paardsdrank". The geographical coordinates are the following: 51°23'27" N.L. - 4°58'00" E.L.

The landscape is characterized by low dunes in a coversand region. The excavated areas are localized on top of a parabolic dune, which encloses its deflation basin towards the south. Such a geomorphological situation seems to be characteristic for most epipaleolithic and mesolithic settlements in sandy northern Belgium and southern Netherlands.

The stratigraphy is as follows, from top to bottom:

- 0— 30 cm: Ap, disturbed horizon
- 30— 50 cm: A₂, sandy leached gray-white horizon
- 50— 55 cm: B_{2h}, sandy horizon of humic accumulation
- 55— 65 cm: B_{2ir}, sandy horizon of ferric accumulation
- 65— 90 cm: yellow sand without stratification
- 90— 95 cm: greyish sand with charcoal
- 95—100 cm: whitish sand with charcoal
- 100—150 cm: yellowish stratified sand

The uppermost layers can be interpreted as soil horizons of a humic iron podzol. The level 90—100 cm is

known as the Usselo layer, which can be dated to the Allerød interstadial. The implications of such a stratigraphy have already been discussed elsewhere (P. M. Vermeersch, 1977).

The excavation

Vertical dispersion of the artifacts

Most of the artifacts were distributed in the lower part of the A₂ horizon and the upper part of the B₂ horizon. As it is the case for most mesolithic settlements of the Belgian lowland, the industry can be correlated with the "Sable Dunaire III" of the Beerse formation. On biostratigraphical grounds this "Sable Dunaire III" and the accompanying industries should be dated from the Younger Dryas to the Boreal (P. M. Vermeersch, 1976).

Horizontal dispersion of the artifacts

Three major concentration areas could be detected. Sectors 1 and 4 present a rather irregular, long-drawn configuration whereas sector 5 is clearly oval-shaped. Fragments of burned sandstone and quartz were especially numerous in sector 1. In sector 4, some ceramic sherds were present in the same level as the mesolithic industry. We didn't find field indications of possible disturbance which could be responsible for their presence. For the moment it is impossible to attribute these very worn sherds to any of the known regional cultures. In sector 5 numerous nutshells of *Corylus avellana* were collected. Apart from these three concentrations, some dispersed artifacts could be found all over the dune.

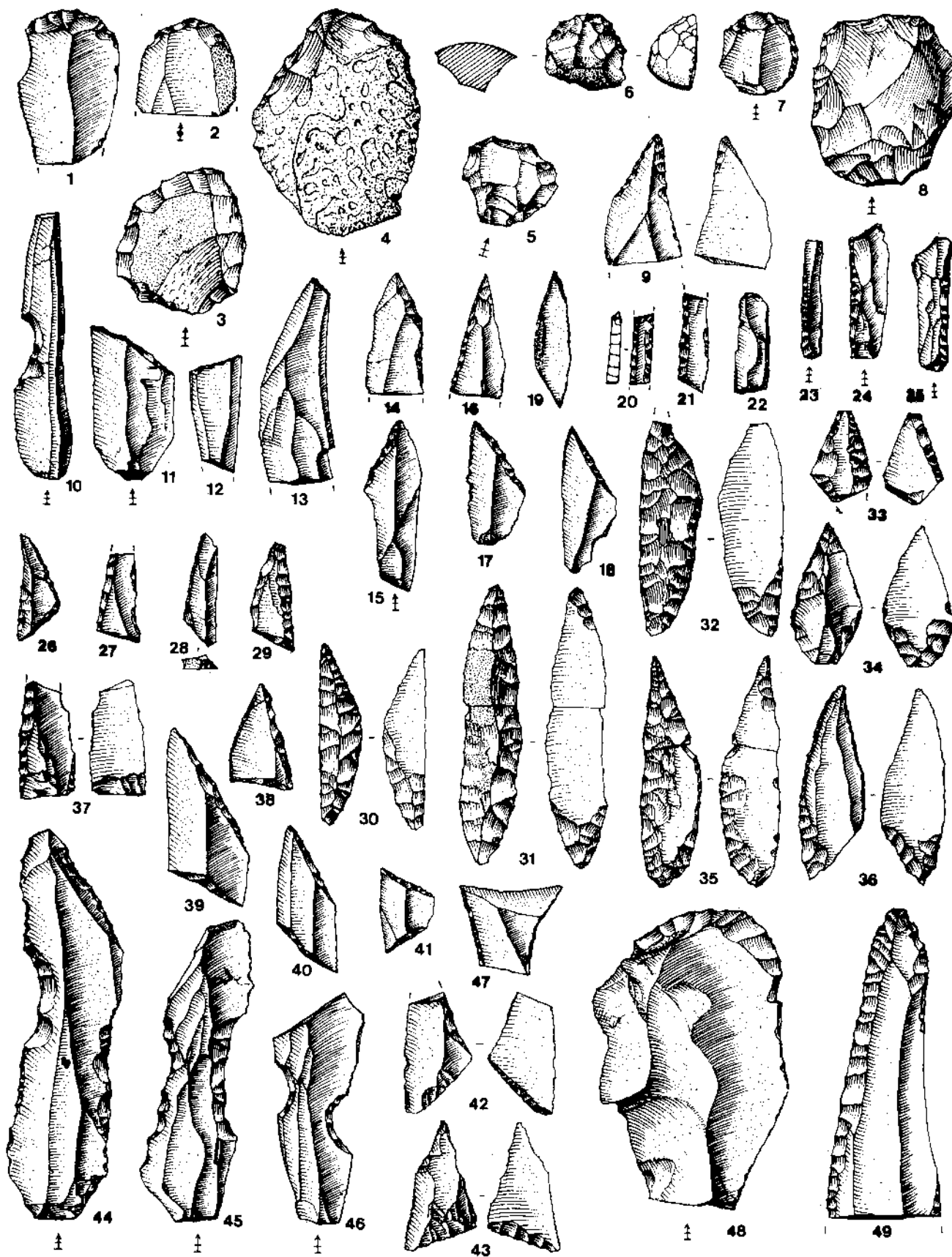


Fig. 1: Weelde-Paardsdrank sector 1, 1:1

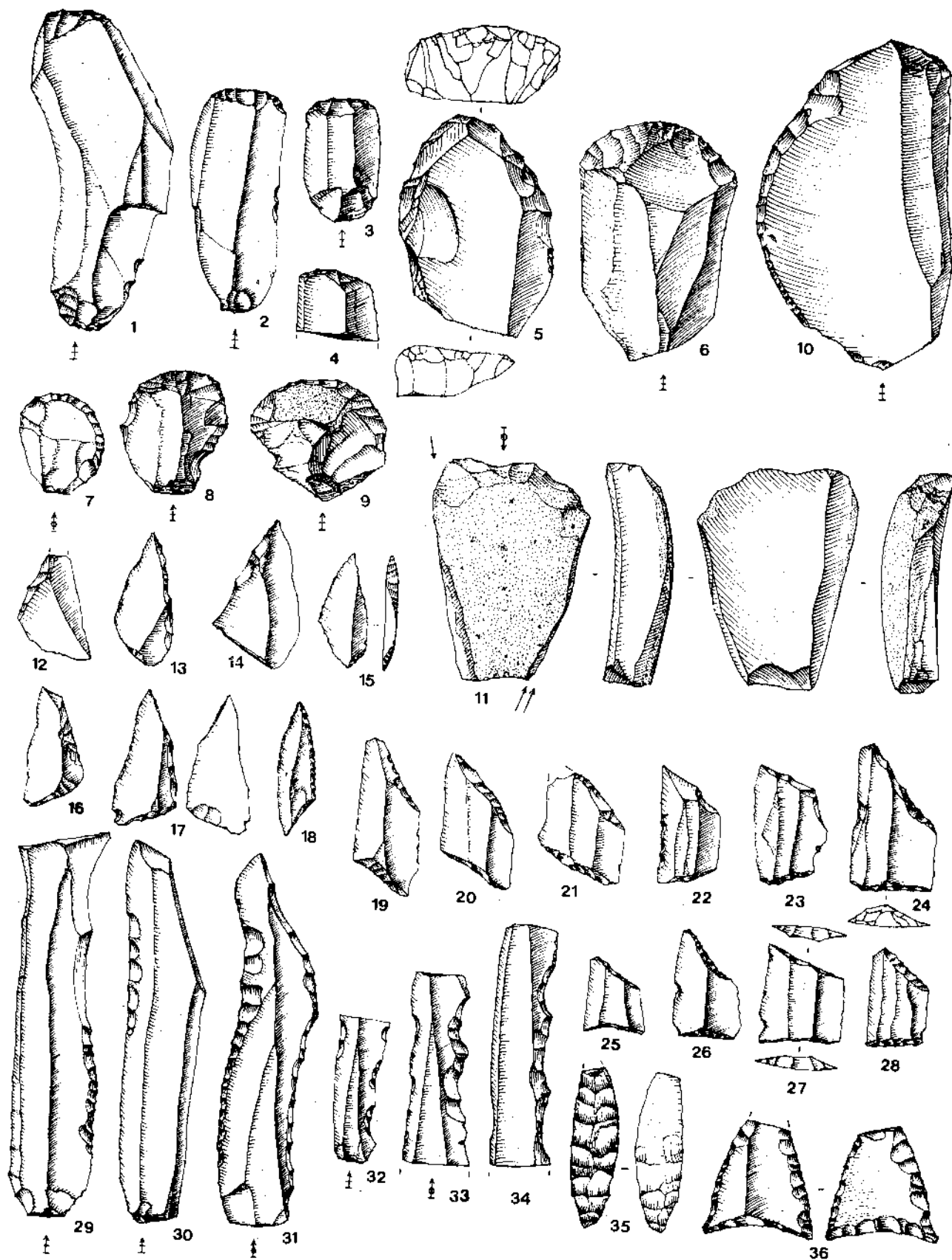


Fig. 2: Weelde-Paardsdrank sector 4. 1:1

lateralisation of trapezes and points with unretouched base.

Conclusions

As ^{14}C -dating and sedimentological analysis are in process we have an direct indication on the age of the settlements. The internal differences between the sectors will be discussed later. The material of Weelde-Paardsdrank seems very similar to that of Opglabbeek-

Ruiterskuil (P. M. Vermeersch, A. V. Munaut, E. Paulissen, 1974 (Fig. 4). However, the presence of numerous points with unretouched base can be an argument for a typologically older dating of the Weelde assemblages. As Montbani blades and bladelets are absent in Gent Port-Arthur and Lommel Coll. Destexhe (J.-G. Rozoy, 1971) (Fig. 4) these sites can be considered as typologically older than Weelde-Paardsdrank. Whatever is true, the final Mesolithic of the Belgian Campine seems to present a structure far more complex than was predicted before (J.-G. Rozoy, 1976).

Zusammenfassung

Weelde und das Endmesolithikum der belgischen Kempen

Ausgrabungen bei Weelde-Paardsdrank in der Antwerpener Kempen (Nordbelgien) ergaben drei größere Konzentrationen mesolithischer Fundmaterialien. Die Arte-

fakte verteilten sich auf den unteren Bereich des A₂-Horizonts und die oberen Lagen des B₂-Horizonts eines podsolierten Dünenbodens. Auf Grund ihrer technologischen und typologischen Charakteristika kann die Industrie dem Endmesolithikum zugeordnet werden.

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